

Fall For My Ex's Mafia Dad

#Chapter 2 - Negotiating Alone

Kent leans his shoulder against the bars of his cell, his well-muscled arms crossed against his chest.

What was he doing in this local prison, created to catch the overflow of the city's rampant gangs? He was their king, after all.

And to think, Kent was here by choice.

His lip raises in derision as he shakes his head, wondering if he made the right decision, intentionally getting caught so he could get in here, just

for the chance to talk to the warden.

Two blue-uniformed guards walk down the row towards him. "Lippert?" They ask. "Warden wants to see you." They cuff him and take him to the warden's office.

Kent sits down on a chair in front of him, wordless, waiting for the guards to leave.

"So," Sven says, closing his file. "I'm surprised you had the balls to come to my turn for a negotiation, Lippert. It's brave."

The public didn't know it, but Warden Sven not only runs this prison, but leverages his control over it to take a significant stake in the workings of the city's underworld. He is as dirty as the rest of them, and if other bosses go against him? He locks them up.

Quite a trump card in this world where one of the only things that stops a gangster is a stay in prison.

"I'll be out soon enough," Kent responds, leaning back in his chair. "We have to talk about Ivan."

"Ivan?" Sven looks at him closely. "He's chicken shit."

Kent shakes his head slowly. “He’s just a kid, but he’s getting a foot in the heroin game. But because he’s green he doesn’t have the grit or the resources to handle it.” He pauses a moment, taking Sven in.

“He’s getting backed into a corner,” Kent continues, “and it’s making him ruthless. He’s not coming to meetings of the families, he’s killing at will – made men, as well as wise guys. He has to be stopped, Sven. Or he’s going to wreck it for all of us.”

Sven leans back into his chair, considering.

Kent steels himself, staring Sven down. Antony, his cousin and second-in-command, had told him it was foolish to lock himself up for months just for the chance to talk to Sven. But Kent had a gut feeling this was the right call. An alliance with Sven against Ivan was going to pay off. Big time.

“I see your point,” Sven says, breathing out through his nose. “Ivan’s too big for his britches, eh? It’s a delicate ecosystem,” he says, holding his hands out like a set of scales to demonstrate the balance. “We’ve all got to play our parts. If he pushes too far, he destroys it for all of us.”

Sven nods, considering his next words before continuing. “I have to admit, Lippert, I’m impressed with your persistence in this matter. I’ve done good work isolating myself, protecting myself, but you found a way in. Not everyone would come to my turf, and stay so long, just for a meeting with me. I respect that. You’re a real capo, a good guy. I’m glad that I know this.”

Kent nods, silently confirming this read of him. That’s exactly how he wanted Sven to feel. “Ivan’s a mad dog,” Kent says. “We’ve got to put him down. I’ll provide the muscle; all I ask is that you let us. Don’t interfere. As for the spoils...we split fifty-fifty.”

Sven eyes him, considering. “I want eighty-twenty, for my agreement to let you handle it.”

Kent doesn’t let his frustration show. He doesn’t care if Sven takes it all, honestly – Sven has power, but he’s notoriously low on cash, a problem Kent doesn’t have. But he can’t let himself be bowled over. “Sixty-forty,” he says, stern.

Sven shrugs, not agreeing yet, but not pushing the matter further. “What about the other bosses?” he asks. “Are you anticipating pushback from Alden?”

Kent shakes his head quickly. “Alden’s distracted. His guys are running the game, but he’s got some new clue about his lost kid.” He waves a hand, dismissing it. “He’s not going to take a side.”

Sven nods, giving him a small smile, and Kent realizes that Sven already knew this. Sven might not have cash, but he does trade in secrets. Likely, Alden got the clue from him to begin with. Kent narrows his eyes, realizing that question was a test.

He doesn’t like being tested. “Do we have a deal?”

Sven shrugs, again noncommittal. He turns in his chair to stare at a calendar on his wall, the picture of a beautiful vineyard somewhere in Europe. “You know, I had a lovely glass of wine the other day. From Napa. But I gotta tell you, Lippert,” he turns here, looking Kent directly in the eye. “It left me a little parched, a little...too dry.”

Sven’s lips start to lift in a cold smirk. “You wouldn’t happen to know...anywhere else. Where a man could get a *finer* glass of wine. A *really* good drink. Would you?”

Kent flicks his eyes to the calendar again, realizing suddenly that the picture on the wall is a picture of *his* vineyard, the calendar likely produced as a promotional gift for tourists. Sven knew exactly what Kent would ask even before he set foot in the room, and he knew exactly the price of his cooperation.

“France,” Kent says slowly, narrowing his eyes and staring at Sven. Perhaps not such a clean alliance after all. “The best wine in the world comes from France.”

“You know, I’d like to try that wine,” Sven says, turning back to the picture, all innocence. “I’d like to get a foot in the industry too. Maybe get some property there, some day.”

“Done.” Kent said. It’s worth the price.

A good meeting. Kent leaves satisfied.

As they walk down the hall, one of the guards turns to him. “We’ve been ordered to take you along to your psychological assessment before returning you to your cell,” he informs him. Kent glares at him, but says nothing.

The guard shrugs. “Standard procedure, Lippert. All prisoners gotta do it.”

Kent stays silent, following. Sven is pushing it, making him undergo psychological testing, when he’d be out of here tomorrow. He’s just trying to collect more secrets.

Kent follows the guards to a cinder-block cell at the end of the hallway, noting that his lawyer is standing outside the door. The lawyer rolls his eyes to Kent and points at his watch, indicating that he’ll have him out of here in no time. Kent nods, and then focuses his attention on the door.

He’s surprised, when it opens, to see a girl inside.

Not a girl, perhaps, a young woman – twenty-three, at the most. She stands up, clearly anxious, biting her lip and playing with the long red ponytail that drifts over her shoulder. Her mouth falls open, just slightly, as she takes him in.

God damnit, Kent thinks, his whole body going tense at the sight of her – those long legs, knocked at the knees with anxiety, her short white skirt, that ridiculous blazer that she wears so people like him will take her seriously.

He can tell from a single glance that she’s pure as the driven snow – ambitious but poor, eager to prove herself. His eyes rove over her, considering what she’d look like if he ripped that blazer off of her. He focuses, again, on those red lips, slightly parted.

His breath hisses from his mouth at the sight of those lips, at the thought of what he could do with them.

“Um,” she says, hesitant.

He snaps his attention back to her jewel-blue eyes.

“My name is Fay Thompson? I’m here to do your preliminary interview for state psychological assessment?”

Kent grits his teeth, denying his urge to smile slowly at the fact that her statements are presented as questions. God, she’s perfect, this little angel. The feral, leashed part of him wants to know what she’d look like with a little bit of the underworld’s grime smeared all over her.

“Hello, Fay,” he says, his voice low and hungry as he moves forward and settles into his chair. “Where do we begin?”